

REMARKS

Claims 6-8 were pending in this application. Claim 9 newly added. Hence, claims 6-8 are now pending in this application.

Claim 6 has been amended to correct a grammatical error. Specifically, the “a” was with “one or more” to reflect the plural meaning of the term “criteria.”

Claims 9-10 were added in order to more fully claim the invention. Support for the amendment may be found throughout the specification in general and at least on page 11, lines 11-13 and page 12, line 21 to page 13, line 1.

No new matter was added.

Rejections

Claims 6-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Ahlstrom et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,862,357).

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ahlstrom et al. in view of Bunyan et al. (EP 1,076,307).

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Claimed Invention

The present invention, as recited in claim 6, is directed to a method for facilitating selection of travel itineraries. The method comprises selecting a travel criteria, defining a traveler profile containing traveler preferences associated with the travel criteria, and deriving preference factors, including a lowest fare multiplier, an available dates index, a non-stop service index, and an equipment type index for the travel criteria based on the traveler preferences. The method further comprises initiating a query of at least one travel information database for itineraries matching the selected travel criteria using an on-line search engine, and calculating a travel value index for each itinerary using a travel value algorithm that subtracts preference factors from, or adds preference factors to, or both, an optimal value of the travel value index depending on the criteria matching itineraries. Only itineraries where the travel value index thereof satisfies a traveler defined threshold are returned.

Arguments in Support of the Claims

In order to anticipate a claim, a prior art reference must disclose each and every element of the claim. *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987) (“A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference.”). In the present case, Applicant respectfully submits that neither Ahlstrom et al. nor Bunyan et al. (nor any other art of record), taken individually or together, discloses or suggests the claimed invention.

For example, Ahlstrom et al. fails to disclose or suggest returning only itineraries where the travel value index (i.e., score) satisfies a traveler defined threshold. Nowhere does Ahlstrom et al. disclose or suggest screening an itinerary after it has been scored. In fact, nowhere does Ahlstrom et al. disclose or suggest any kind of threshold score, much less a traveler defined threshold score. The logical conclusion is that the Ahlstrom et al. system returns all itineraries once they have been scored.

An important aspect of Ahlstrom et al. is that certain itineraries are screened **before they are scored**, for example, because they do not meet certain travel policy restrictions. (See col. 10, lines 52-57.) Ahlstrom et al. does not, however, disclose or suggest screening the scored itineraries, as recited in the claimed invention.

Ahlstrom et al. also fails to disclose or suggest stopping a query before final completion for those itineraries that cannot meet the (threshold) travel value index or score (see claim 7). In other words, the travel value index or score is being computed and compared to the threshold score during execution of the query. If it looks like the travel value index or score of a certain itinerary is not going to be able to satisfy the threshold score, then that query for that itinerary may be stopped before completion to preserve processing resource. In contrast, Ahlstrom et al. allows the query for each itinerary to proceed all the way to completion and screening is then performed only to determine which of the completed itineraries should be scored.

Ahlstrom et al. further fails to disclose or suggest an optimal value for the travel value index or score, which is the best of all possible scores, from which preference factors may be added to or subtracted from, or both. In contrast, the Ahlstrom et al. system begins with an initial score that is equal to the dollar value or fare of the itinerary. (See col. 10, 28-31.) This initial dollar value is not an “optimal” value because it does indicate what the best of all possible

scores may be. Nevertheless, an advantage of the Ahlstrom et al. dollar-focused approach is that it allows the user to quickly assess the monetary worth of a particular itinerary. This distinction is important and should not be minimized or trivialized because money is often the key factor in many decisions. But since the itineraries are likely to have different dollar values or fares (dramatically different in some cases), Ahlstrom et al. cannot be said to disclose or suggest one single optimal value for the scores.

Bunyan et al. also fails to disclose or suggest the elements of the claimed invention. Rather, Bunyan et al. appears to be directed merely to a method of rating holidays based on user preferences and other users' feedback. Nowhere does Bunyan et al. disclose or suggest, for example, screening itineraries, or doing so according to a user defined threshold after they have been scored.

According, because neither Ahlstrom et al. nor Bunyan et al. (nor any other art of record) discloses or suggests each and every element of the claimed invention, withdrawal of the rejection against claim 6 is respectfully requested.

As for dependent claims 7-10, although they recite independently allowable subject matter, these claims depend from claim 6 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection against the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION


The rejections and objections raised by the Examiner have been addressed, and Applicant believes that the claims are now in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested. If any questions or issues remain and the resolution of which the Examiner feels will be advanced by a conference with the Applicant's attorney, the Examiner is invited to contact the attorney at the number noted below.

Patent Application
Attorney Docket No. 41235-66USPT

No fees are believed to be due, however the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account 10-0047, reference 41235-66USPT (DGN).

Respectfully submitted,
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